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623 The meetings (which I have had many opportunities of attending) are quiet and dignified, the discussion flows slowly, no loud word is spoken; the young men are mostly silent, only the elder ones take part. If controversies or disagreements occur, they are never apparent in the discussion itself. Rather they reveal themselves in the disconcerting practice that what had seemed to be happily settled in one discussion will be questioned again in the next; and men whose agreement seemed to be successfully secured to-day will call another meeting of their own to-morrow or the next day and start the discussion all over again.

The appointment to a new rank is a matter of little ceremony. It is identical with the modest ceremonial that accompanies succession to the position of a family head (to be described in a later chapter) with which, in fact, it frequently coincides. Appointments to high *nūsa* ranks usually fall in the long period of mourning for the late holder of the rank, and so exclude any festivity or general celebration. Appointment to a new rank, which would mostly fall to a comparatively young man, is sometimes made the occasion of a little feasting: beer or palm-wine for the guests and a dance in the afternoon and evening to which neighbours, friends, and above all the comrades from the age-grade association are invited. But more often there is nothing; the selected candidate would be summoned to the chief's house before the assembled council of elders, and would be informed that *nwa'a gi Tsowa*, 'he had been appointed (lit. had eaten) *Tsowa*', or some other such rank, and that is all. Only by the self-importance with which the new *nūsa* carries himself in the next few days or weeks will you be able to say that this had indeed been an important occasion. If by mistake you address him by his old title, he—or others who know—will put you right at once.

623 609 123 Perhaps I should mention that I have myself gone through this experience when the people of Jebba Island decided to bestow a rank on me, who had become in their eyes a 'full Nupe', and who at any rate was insisting on being treated as one when it came to religious meetings or confidential discussions of village matters. I had to make a few small presents (from which even a 'real' *nūsa*-candidate might not be exempted) to chief and elders; they were 'sitting' for three days, discussing the most suitable title, till eventually the senior *nūsa* informed me that I had been given the title *Shaba* (a very high rank but, needless to say, introduced *ad hoc*, and copied from the rank-list of other villages). A day or two after my appointment I walked through the village and met some people [576] who used the customary greeting for Europeans, *zaki*; but my companions called the people sharply to order, informing them that I was *Shaba* of Jebba now, which information at once elicited the greeting corresponding to the *Shaba* rank, *gbako nyenkpa* (body of iron). In a week or two there was nobody within ten miles of the place who did not know of my new rank.

CHIEFTAINSHIP

622 184 Chieftainship in Nupe is, like the system of *nūsa* ranks, characterized by the coexistence of two systems of succession: promotion and hereditary succession. In Jebba and Mokwa the chief's rank is merely the

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hereditary chieftainship, the accumulation of surplus renders such development more likely. But even here the existence of the special chief's cult, which imposes additional expenses on the chief (higher than in the case of cults to which he need only contribute his share), should tend to adjust more equitably the economic balance between chief and elders.[1]

However, we have other evidence to show that the chief's position, economically privileged though it may be, is not *meant* to lead to the formation of an essentially different, sharply separated, permanently privileged ruling class; evidence, in other words, to show that the political organization of the village is meant to preserve the social homogeneity of its community. This evidence lies in the rules of etiquette defining the behaviour of the people towards their chief. People everywhere show reverence to their chief: they kneel down by the door when entering his presence. Often there are raised platforms in the chief's entrance hut, near the door leading to the inner part of the house, on which he would sit, while the others are squatting on the ground in front of him. Or the chief would sit on a leopard skin or at least a cow-hide, while the others are assigned seats on grass-mats. The chief, finally, is addressed by special formulae of greeting reserved for his title. Yet again, this attitude of reverence represents only the highest grade of respect as it is shown similarly to all *nũsaži*, graded in accordance with age and rank. In every house young men or visitors of lower status and seniority would squat near the door while the head of the house, or honoured guests, occupy places on the inner side—the more honoured side. Special greetings of the same symbolic nature as the salute reserved for the chief are typical of the various ranks. Here as in the case of economic privileges etiquette marks off the chief not as standing on 'a plane by himself' but merely as the most prominent in a graded order of prominence. If on state occasions, wearing his state robe and turban, the chief is conspicuously marked off from the rest of the people, when going out to his farms there is nothing to distinguish him from an ordinary farmer; like him he carries his hoe across the shoulder, a straw hat on his head, and wears only the cheap blue cloth slung loosely round the body. There is thus ample 'neutral ground' in the matter of etiquette and distinction of status between chief, elders, and the rest of the people.

But above all, the attitude of reverence and the special chief's salute are reserved for the chief's person; they are not enjoyed equally by his relations merely in virtue of their being his relations. The exalted social position of the chief does not extend to his family—there exist, even in hereditary chieftainship, no symbols of a hereditary class differentiation. Later, in the discussion of social classes in the kingdom, we shall understand fully the significance of this 'democratic' element in Nupe village chieftainship.

[1] In 1936 the chief of Doko bought five sheep for sacrifices connected with the 'chief's cult', contributed beer to other ceremonies, and presented two gowns to men with whom he was anxious to keep on good terms—not counting occasional small gifts and contributions, e.g. to family feasts, &c. Altogether an expenditure of approximately £2–3, or 30 to 40 bundles of corn, that is, roughly half of his income from tithe.

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Out of this large and varied income the king gave directly very little to the common weal: he 'financed' certain public works, the repair or the building of the city mosque, his own palace, and the town walls and gates. The work itself was organized by the members of the lower nobility and carried out by their slaves and serfs; the king contributed only food and drink for the labourers, and small presents for the men in charge of the work. From his income, but assisted by gifts from other members of the royal house, the *Etsu* also paid the annual tribute to the Emir of Gwandu, by which the kings of Bida recognized the sovereignty of that ancient centre of the Fulani Empire.[1] Finally, the king, equipped his army with horses and arms, and formed of his personal slaves the police force which had to keep order in markets and streets. But indirectly the king contributed very considerably to the economic life of the country. The court was the centre round which the economic and cultural life of the capital revolved. The splendour of the court life of Nupe, famous in Nigeria, meant work and income for thousands, incessant production in the workshops of the craftsmen, and rich business for the merchants. Beautifully built houses to live in; gorgeous gowns, horses, saddles, arms, to be given as presents to courtiers and members of the household; food and drink, music and dances, for the great feasts celebrated at court, these were (and still are) the daily needs of the royal household. Presents play an important part in the etiquette of Nupe kingdom: from a small bowl of kola-nuts to a silk gown or a horse range these expressions of the king's favour. And at the great Mohammedan festival of the year, the *Sallah* as it is called in Nigeria, every one of the hundreds of people who by the right of birth or status are entitled to the king's attention are honoured with a smaller or larger gift. To be left out means disgrace; and the sending of a present to a man with whom the *Etsu* was known to be on bad terms expresses conspicuously reconciliation and new favour.

Of the former sources of royal income only two have survived under modern conditions: profits from occasional trade, and the proceeds of the royal estates (materially reduced by the transformation of slave labour into labour on the métayer system, or even wage-labour; see p. 200). To this we have to add to-day the Emir's considerable salary. On the other hand, his expenses, too, have been greatly reduced: public works, the upkeep of a police force, even the building of the royal residence, now form items on the list of Native Administration expenditure. But all the current expenses, all those demanded by status and prestige, by the etiquette of the kingdom, and by the necessity of winning supporters for himself and his house, are still as much part of the unwritten obligations of an *Etsu* Nupe as they ever were.

A DAY OF COURT ROUTINE

Every morning the *Etsu* mounts his horse and, accompanied by members of his household and some of his officers of state, rides round

[1] In the first period of British rule this tribute consisted of 100 gowns worth £300, 200 gowns worth £125, and one silver sword worth £10.

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Or, in the sphere of etiquette: men of equal rank greet each other by cowering low (women go down on one knee) for half a minute or longer while exchanging the formulae of greeting and, if they are well acquainted, stretching out their hands several times in succession and lightly touching each other's fingers. A man of lower rank when meeting his social superior will bow very low or kneel down, and only if the difference of rank is slight or obviated by personal intimacy (as between a *bara* and his patron), will he venture to offer his hand. If he is on horseback, he will dismount; if he is wearing sandals, he will take them off, though it may be on the road, and put them beside him; if he enters the house of his social superior, he will keep close to the door, squatting there till he is summoned to come near. The man of higher rank will stand or sit still, or make a short perfunctory gesture of bowing, and hardly move his arm to meet the other man's hand. When sitting together in a group, the man of low rank always sits slightly behind the man of higher rank. In the presence of the *Etsu*, *Alkali*, the highest ranks, or royal princes, you may not rest your arms on the floor—this would be disrespectful: the proper posture is to squat cross-legged, the arms folded in your lap, and to bend forward a little so that it should not seem as if you were looking straight at your superior. The *Ndeji* and *Maiyaki* were the only men whom I have seen behave really freely in the presence of the king; all others, even the *Alkali* and the royal princes, acted in a conspicuously submissive and slightly constrained manner.

That one addresses one's superior always through a third person is a common feature of African etiquette. So is, I believe, the custom of pulling the sleeve or a cloth over one's hand when offering a gift to a person of superior rank. Of gifts as a symbol of Nupe class etiquette there is more to say. In Nupe (as in the whole of Northern Nigeria) kola-nuts are the commodity most universally used for gifts and presents. To announce your visit or to invite somebody's visit, to win the favour of another man or to express your appreciation of another man's services, you send a present of kola-nuts. Their quality and amount reflect precisely the social status of donor and receiver.

I have already mentioned the existence in Nupe of two kinds of kola-nuts, the cheap southern variety, and the expensive kola-nut from Laboži; the latter, as we have seen, could be obtained only by, or through, the *Etsu* himself—presents of Laboži kola-nuts were thus symbols of royal favour, and unobtainable by anyone who was not in one way or another connected with the court. When I attended the *Sallah* at the *Etsu*'s court in 1936, he had two bowls (teapots, as a matter of fact) full of kola-nuts in front of him, one filled with Laboži nuts and the other with the small cheaper kind. To watch him distribute the kola-nuts—the kind and amount as well as the gestures which accompanied the gifts—was to watch the rank system of Nupe come alive. He presented ten Laboži nuts through a servant to all the higher rank-holders, and five in the same manner to the less exalted officers of state. He then gave one especially big one with his own hands to the men of highest position—the *Ndeji*, *Maiyaki*, *Alkali* (and myself)—and threw one into the lap of favourites and friends whose rank called less for formality. Finally,

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small kola-nuts, in fives or tens, were handed out to messengers, dancers, guild-heads, and other people of lower rank.

Even language and music are used as symbols of class. There exist in Nupe special drum-rhythms, *take*, greeting formulae, *kirari* (Hausa, lit. 'calls'), and songs which are linked with certain noble families and important ranks. As soon as a family comes to power or a man receives rank and title, the drummers of Bida will compose such *take* and *kirari* in their honour. You can, in fact, have them made to order, at various prices; but an influential person will not need to order them, for the drummers, counting on his patronage, will supply him at once with this musical salute. Some of the *take* and *kirari* which one can hear to-day date back to pre-Fulani times; others were composed recently. Whenever a member of these noble families attends a festivity, the drummers would announce his arrival by playing 'his' *take* and singing 'his' *kirari*, and the 'master of ceremonies', who is always present at such gatherings, would recite a long list of illustrious ancestors to whom the nobleman can lay claim, the ranks which he had held, and the deeds which he achieved. Lastly, the Nupe address each other by titles only, and never by name, if the person addressed bears a title. Special formulae of greeting are linked with every rank, and thus mark position on the social scale by the most obvious system of signs—everyday speech.

Class symbols and class etiquette shade over into the more substantial differences of class. Behaviour which is pressed into the service of class manifestation becomes indistinguishable from behaviour which results from differences in social and economic advantage. The right to carry a sword or appear everywhere on horseback presupposes the economic ability to acquire these 'emblems of rank'. Submissive behaviour of a client towards his patron, or a member of the lower class towards a man of rank, is determined as much by the convention of class etiquette as by the special interest of gaining favour in the eyes of a person of consequence. Here we are dealing with the other aspect of class differentiation, those 'cultural' differences which are, or become, typical of different classes. They revolve round the two pivots: political and economic structure.[1] They involve the existence of political prerogatives and the varying measures of individual liberty and mastery over one's own destiny, enjoyed by the different classes. Here we can outline the existing classes of Nupe society. We have met their protagonists already: the ruling class of the kingdom, rich absentee landlords, men whose occupation was war and slave-raiding, and, low down on the social scale, commoners and peasants, heavily taxed, and gaining a scanty livelihood rendered insecure by the very facts that add power and prestige to the ruling class. We have also met the craftsmen in the town, who share some of the privileges of the nobility, and the Mohammedan intelligentsia who can attach themselves to the highest stratum irrespective of

[1] The two structures do not define identical strata, nor is the economic differentiation invariably reducible to political prerogatives. However, we will leave the examination of the exact relation between the two 'pivots' of social stratification for a later chapter.

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462 441 snuff and smoking, its modern counterpart, cigarettes, and kola-nuts, although they are used mostly by men. To the second category belong the various products of Nupe fashion industry, rings, bracelets, chains, ladles, glass-ware, beads, and also the low carved stools, made by the carpenters, on which the Nupe women are wont to sit. The products of women's crafts are traded by women, irrespective of their use: thus the women sell cloth woven by women (used chiefly for women's dresses), indigo dye (which may be used by and for the men), native soap and pots, including the pitchers which the men use for ablutions. All goods produced by men and used by men are marketed by male traders: hoes, axes, arms, gowns, straw hats, books, leather-work, &c. Goods used by both sexes are traded by both men and women: for example, mats, and certain kinds of cloth of native or European make. Live stock is always marketed by men, only chickens are sometimes sold on the market by women.

462 441 868 Throughout this description the term 'woman' means married women as well as girls, mothers and wives as well as daughters. Small girls of 6 or 8 will already 'keep shop' in play, sitting behind a basket in which they have arranged a few pebbles, little rags of cloth or cigarette tins filled with sand, and silently display their 'goods', as they have seen their mothers and elder sisters do. Mothers always take their young girls to the market, letting them sit beside them and, if they are big enough, carry some of the loads on the way there and back. Girls of 12 or 13 will assist their mothers or deputize for them when they are called away; or they will take some of the cooked food which the women sell, and walk through the market and adjoining streets, crying out the wares, while the mother remains sitting behind her basket. This is, incidentally, an interesting division of labour between mother and daughter, and old and young trader in general. For it is against the dignity of grown-up [576] women to cry out their wares—only young girls may do that. A girl of 14 or 16 is already fully initiated into the secrets of commerce, and will soon start to trade on her own, with a capital of a few pennies or a small store of grain or ground-nuts given her by her mother. By degrees the capital and the scope of her business will grow. I remember a court case in Bida in which two girls, between 14 and 15 years of age, had been summoned because they had fought on the market. The fight was about a piece of cloth which one girl had taken from the other, agreeing to buy it for a certain amount; but later she declared it to be too dear, and paid only half the agreed price. The price of the cloth was 6*d.*, and the people in the court were very amused about this commercial transaction in (as the *Alkali* put it) 'little girl's rags'. However, 'little girl's rags' become real cloth, and even more valuable goods, in the course of time, and when the girl marries she is a fully fledged trader, and fully versed in the art of marketing which will be one of her duties as a married woman. Her [428 562] earnings remain her own property and cannot during her lifetime be touched by her husband. Only when she dies will the husband be entitled to inherit her property.

593 562 This brings us to the question of the economic inequality of husband and wife. It is implied in this division of labour between the sexes which

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561 554 themselves similarly heterogeneous and arbitrary, including Bida titles among its traditional village ranks.

561 554 516 The system of precedence involved in *ena* ranks and grades is taken very seriously, and the rigid rules of etiquette which govern it are enacted with all solemnity. Much of the *ena* business takes place, as we shall see, within the single *ena*; but when members of different grades meet—for example, at family feasts in the house of a member, or at collective farm-work—submissive or condescending behaviour marks their relation towards each other. Members of a junior grade will never dance when members of senior grades are present, except with their special permission and at their request; in collective farm-work the junior grades work at the back of the team, at less important and less conspicuous tasks. Age-grade etiquette is even more emphatic within the individual association. At communal meals the 'subalterns' will wait till their superiors have eaten; at *ena* feasts subaltern and senior ranks will never dance at the same time; when greeting a superior, the age-grade member of lower rank will squat down and bend his head, exactly as prescribed for intercourse between superiors and inferiors in the social scale of 'real life'.

561 554 369 In the village *ena* it is only in general terms that the ranks indicate social position on the rank-scale of the association. In the town *ena* the ranks are sometimes chosen so as to indicate and do justice to the special gifts, or the special social position outside the *ena*, which characterize individual members. In this the organization of the town *ena* reflects the more highly differentiated social structure of urban society. Thus a Bida *ena*, composed largely of illiterate members, assigned to a young man who had been educated in the Government Middle School the title *Naïbi*, a rank of the Mohammedan clergy which can be held only by scholars. The rank-list of another *ena* included the rank *Boroti*, lit. Head of the Bororó, its holder being the son of the late Emir's 'regent-delegate' for the Bororó Fulani. Some Bida age-grade ranks indicate a certain official capacity held by a member in the *ena*. Thus I found a rank *Dzufā* (lit. pocket) bestowed on a young man who acted as 'purser' of the group. All purchases and payments for *ena* purposes were made through him; when, for example, a member decided to give a party for the group he would place his money contribution in the hands of the *Etsu*, who would then hand it over to the 'purser' as the member responsible for financial arrangements. In one *ena* I found the rather curious rank *Mataushe* (Hausa, lit. 'the man who rubs', i.e. 'masseur'), by which name a certain slave or body-servant of the Nupe king was known whose special duty it was to massage the feet of his master. In like manner it was the duty of this 'office holder' in the age-grade association to massage the feet of his *Etsu* at meetings of the group when his master felt tired.

561 554 177 One group of ranks typical of the Bida *ena* deserves special attention, namely the ranks which are organized on 'European lines' and copy, not ranks and offices of Nupe society, but ranks, offices, and even names of Europeans with whom the Nupe had come into contact. Such titles are often amusing and even puzzling. In one *ena* the head of the group was

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not called *Etsu* but *Gomna Ture*, European Governor. Other ranks in the same *ena* were *Kantoma* (Station Magistrate), *Joji* (District Officer), *Likita* (Doctor); there was also the rank *Dupienne*, derived from the name of Mr. Dupigny, a former Resident of Niger Province, a rank *Borti* (Major Burton), *Mallam Smi* (Mr. Smith, a former Superintendent of Education), and *Jamsi Dogo* (lit. Long James, a title which referred to a former clerk in the Divisional Office); it was, not unnaturally, the lowest title on the rank-list. Another *ena* organized on modern lines was divided into two sections, a 'native' and a 'European' section, the former consisting of Nupe titles, the latter of Europeanized names and ranks, such as *Gomna*, *Joji*, *Likita*, *Rezdet* (Resident), *Kantoma*, *Misisi* (Mrs.), *Hafissa* (Officer), and *Karamin Joji* (Assistant District Officer). In the normal business of the *ena* these two sections behaved differently, and were bound by different rules of etiquette, native and 'European', which meant that the members of the 'European section' had to greet each other in European fashion, by lifting their caps, and had to eat at a table with fork and spoon. I could not help laughing when these rules were explained to me; but the head of the group pointed out, rather indignantly, that this was the most natural thing in the world; after all, 'a Governor does not eat with his hands'.

The seriousness with which these distinctions of ranks are observed, the realism with which this playing at society *à la Européenne* is enacted, forbids us to treat it merely as a childish and meaningless make-belief. Psychologically, it has the significance of a substitute for thrills and achievements which normal life cannot offer. The inclusion of titles and forms of conduct copied from the British officials in the country is part of that 'realism' which marks age-grade etiquette and precedence: it does justice to the new political order of the society, and partly also to the fact that high social position in present-day native society implies intimacy with the Administration and high British officials. If it were asked why the Bida *ena* chose as symbols for social gradation ranks and offices so far removed from their ordinary life, I should point out that there is less difference than one might assume between the two models which the *ena* could choose—the model of European and the model of native society. To the average Bida man the highest ranks and offices of his own society are no less remote and inaccessible than the office of a District Officer or Governor. We must add that the choice of a particular rank-system for the *ena* is in no way determined by the social stratum from which it is recruited. Bida age-grade associations of *tdlaka* and *sarahi* alike adopt the highest ranks both of traditional and British society. Only for a small minority—the few *ena* of the ruling class—may these ranks and offices, and the whole exalted social life which they depict, one day become reality. For the large majority they represent an infinitely remote, imaginary social existence.

Here we are led to the wider problem of the relation between the world of pretence built up in the age-grade association and the values of 'real', that is, adult, social life. It can best be approached through a comparison of village and town *ena*. In the village association the social life enacted in the *ena*, and its prototype in adult life, stand in the relation of potentiality

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woman'. Certain of these clues will be borne out by the biographical sketches which I shall later quote. But let me emphasize that they represent merely a 'theory', firmly held though it may be. When I visited a noted witch with one of my informants (who had strongly stressed the morose and stern aspect of witches) I found her to be a pleasant-spoken young woman, whom I could easily make laugh by some small joke. When, later, I pointed out this apparent anomaly, my informant retorted that the woman had merely put on an act to throw off my suspicions; towards her own people she would still be morose and unfriendly.

But even if these clues are mere theory, they help us to understand the ascription of witchcraft to particular persons. If I tried to sum up briefly the Nupe character as it appears to the observer, I should say that the average person is always friendly, pleasant-spoken and polite, very fond of jokes, chatty, and given to ready laughter. To some extent such behaviour is consciously cultivated. To be unfriendly or unpleasant in intercourse is definitely 'bad form'; polite etiquette has been developed to a fine art; and in the routine of social life joking and playing have their appointed place. Whether the rules of etiquette do not sometimes serve to repress fiercer and less placid leanings, we may for the moment disregard: the point is that politeness and pleasantness constitute the accepted ideals of behaviour, the sort of morale the Nupe believe in. And this morale is valid more fully for the women than for the men, since the women stand outside the two provinces of social life where placidity and friendliness are, on occasion, out of place, namely, esoteric ritual and political struggle.

It is, then, the absence of the accepted morale which makes the Nupe suspect witchcraft. The woman who behaves as the Nupe think witches do is one whose character belies the common precepts and ideals of conduct; she is ill-conditioned, eccentric, 'atypical'—what Margaret Mead would call a 'deviant personality'. In other words, the suspicion of witchcraft fastens upon 'abnormality'; not the physical abnormality, say, of cripples, hunchbacks, or strikingly ugly people, which is merely a matter of ill-luck; nor the mental abnormality of lunatics, which is the handiwork of spirits: but the abnormality of social and moral deviants.

Yet ill-conditioned and eccentric individuals, morose and quarrelsome characters, are as frequent among the men and as openly disapproved. The question therefore remains, why this argument should apply to women only. And unless we are prepared to consider this concentration upon female witchcraft to be sheer accident, we must assume that it is in some fashion symptomatic of the life of the society which created the belief. I